

Burglary Of A Family With Young Children

*A 13 year old boy burgled a family home,
causing fear and distress to two young children.*

A 13 year old male appeared in court and received a 9 month Referral Order for burglary. The Victim Liaison Officer contacted the victim to see if they would be interested in being involved in any Restorative Justice process. While the Youth Offending Team Case Manager was contacting the offender to complete an assessment and explain the process, the Victim Liaison Officer made contact with the victims and arranged a home visit.

The Victims

The victims were a family consisting of Mum, Dad and 2 children aged 7 and 11. They were extremely traumatised by the burglary. The offender had entered their home via the children's bedroom window and had taken toys, a video recorder, video films and a play station with the games. The children were scared that the 'monster' would come back for them. They refused to sleep in the bedroom (a difficult situation as the property only had 2 bedrooms) and needed a light on constantly. The Dad was angry, as they were not insured and he had no way of accessing the money to replace the items taken. The family took some time to consider whether they wanted to meet the offender at the Referral Order Panel meeting but telephoned 5 days after the meeting with the Victim Liaison Officer to say that they would like to attend.

The Meeting

The meeting was held at a time and a place convenient for the victims i.e. a local community centre on a Saturday morning. Initially the Mum and Dad were to attend but in the event, the Dad arrived alone, saying that the Mum was too nervous to come. The offender arrived with his Mum and Step-Dad. After the initial introductions, the Panel Leader asked the offender to explain how he had come to commit the offence, how he felt about it now and what had happened since. The offender explained that he had been told by a gang from school that if he committed the burglary he could become a member of their gang. They had waited outside the property for him and had taken the items as soon as he had emerged. The offender displayed no obvious emotion at this time. The victim listened. The Panel Leader then asked the victim to explain how the offence had affected him and his family, how they felt and what had happened since. As the victim explained the fear and upset that had been caused, particularly to the children, the offender began to cry. He expressed his sincere remorse and asked if he could meet the children to apologise and explain that he was not a 'monster'. This offer was declined but a dialogue developed between the victim, offender and parents and it was agreed that he would make a sorry card for the children (he felt unable to write a letter due to his lack of literary skills). Upon leaving the victim shook hands with the young man and his

parents and insisted that should they bump into each other again, they should smile and say hello. He also wished him luck for the future. As the Victim Liaison Officer escorted the victim out, he expressed his gratitude at being given the opportunity to meet the offender. The case, from first meeting to the face-to-face meeting took 25 days (5 days over national standards for Referral Order Panel Meetings). The offender completed his contract over the following 9 months. The victim was given the option of being kept informed of his progress but declined this, saying he was satisfied with the outcome of the meeting and wanted to put the incident behind him.